

Safe Sleep for Your Baby: Tips and Guidelines



Highlights

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in their own safe sleep space. If you choose to co-sleep with your baby, there are ways to do this more safely. Co-sleeping is not recommended in some circumstances. Co-sleeping can be planned or unintentional, like falling asleep on the couch while holding the baby.

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Creating a Safe Sleep Space for Your Baby

Babies should sleep in their own sleep space, either a cot or a bassinet. A safe sleeping environment removes all potential dangers. The baby should sleep in a safe place for both day and night.

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in a safe cot with a firm, clean, flat, and the right-sized mattress. Ensure the bedding is safe and there is no bulky bedding in the cot.

Position the cot away from hanging cords like blinds, curtains, or electrical items.

Best Practices for Baby Sleep Safety

Some sleeping arrangements are not safe and can increase the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) or sleep accidents.

Here are some tips for keeping your baby safe while sleeping:

Place them on their back to sleep, not on their tummy or side.

Keep the environment smoke-free before and after birth.

Avoid overheating.

Keep their head and face uncovered.

Sleep your baby in their own safe sleep space in your room for the first 6 to 12 months.

Understanding Co-Sleeping: Pros and Cons

Co-sleeping means babies sleep on the same surface as another person. Some parents co-sleep to aid breastfeeding and bonding. However, it's important to remember that co-sleeping isn't always safe. If you decide to co-sleep, there are ways to reduce risks.

Things to Keep in Mind Before Co-Sleeping

It's helpful for parents to consider why co-sleeping is right for them and their baby. Some parents prefer co-sleeping and sleep better with their baby close. Others prefer not to co-sleep but find their baby sleeps better when bed-sharing.

Think about where you want to co-sleep with your baby. Do it as safely as possible. Remember, falling asleep holding your baby on the couch or chair is unsafe. Using pillows to prop up a baby or prevent them from falling out of bed is also dangerous.

It can be hard to co-sleep during the day due to time constraints. Babies benefit from going to sleep in the same, safe place for all naps. This helps them learn where their sleep space is.

How to Make Co-Sleeping Safer

If you choose to co-sleep, here are ways to make it safer:

Place your baby on their back to sleep, not on their side or tummy.

Keep your baby's head and face uncovered. Ensure no pillows or bedding are near them.

Use a safe sleeping bag with a fitted neck and armholes, with no hood. Ensure their arms are free.

Tie up long hair and remove anything that could be a strangling risk, such as jewelry, teething necklaces, or dummy chains.

Ensure your baby can't fall out of bed. Consider placing the mattress on the floor.

Create a clear space for your baby and place them on their back beside one parent. Avoid positioning the baby between two adults or next to other children or pets.

Risk Factors in Co-Sleeping

Several factors can increase the risks of co-sleeping. These include the type of surface the baby sleeps on and the type of bedding used. Loose bedding, blankets, quilts, pillows, and soft toys are risk factors. A soft mattress also increases the risk.

More than one person sharing the bed and where the baby sleeps also matter.

When Co-Sleeping Becomes Unsafe

Co-sleeping is unsafe in these circumstances:

If your baby was born prematurely or is small for their gestational age.

If you or your partner smoke.

If you or your partner use drugs, alcohol, or medication that makes you sleep heavily and less aware.

If you are extremely tired or unwell.

If your baby is sick.

Tools and Assistance

Safe Sleep Guidelines - Follow recommended guidelines from reliable health professionals to ensure your baby sleeps in the safest environment possible.

Pediatric Care Support - Consult your pediatrician or child health professional for personalized advice on sleep safety and co-sleeping.

Safe Co-Sleeping Practices - If you choose co-sleeping, consider tips to minimize risks, such as using a firm mattress, keeping baby's face uncovered, and avoiding dangerous bedding.

Health and Safety Information - Ensure the sources of information you consult are evidence-based and up-to-date, especially when considering co-sleeping.

Emergency Procedures - Familiarize yourself with infant emergency procedures and know what to do in case of an emergency, such as suffocation or choking.